

Borrowed Stimulants Keep Austria Alive

The Defeated and Dismembered Nation Cannot Support Its Inhabitants; Men, Women and Children Are Starving to Death

By R. RUTHERFORD

AUSTRIA is one of the anatomized products of the Versailles Peace Treaty. After dismembering her and carving her down to proportions commensurate with their ideas of proper punishment for her sins and reward for her victors, the Entente political surgeons have left of her a strange, misshapen anomalism, too weak and abbreviated to constitute a national corporeality and not possessing the sources of nutriment necessary to her sustenance. Many attempts at her resuscitation have been made, but she is kept alive only on borrowed stimulants. Still another such effort is now being put forth by the League of Nations Finance Committee, but it is feared that the patient is too far gone. "It is simply one more attempt," says a Vienna newspaper, "to save the bare life of this artificial creation of Entente Imperialism."

All that is left of the once vast Austro-Hungarian Empire is a narrow strip of land smaller than the state of West Virginia. This is called on to sustain 5,000,000 or 6,000,000 inhabitants, 2,000,000 of whom are huddled together in the city of Vienna, so overcrowded that thousands have no place to sleep. The de-annexed sections include all the most fertile lands from which Austria was wont to derive its livelihood. The territory that remains is unfertile for the most part, and trade restrictions and political antipathies have quite isolated it from the surrounding countries. It is not sufficient to support the population outside of Vienna alone. Little wonder then that a famine rages among the inhabitants. With such a reduced subsidiary territory, Vienna is as a head with only a mutilated remnant of a body.

Adventurers Blamed for War

"MOREOVER," writes a British commentator, "the Paris Conference last year saddled the Austrian Republic with the greater part of the debt of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, which was most absurd, for the war rested not so much with the quiet, genial Viennese, or the Austrian population, but with the adventurers who flocked to Vienna from Hungary, Jugo-Slavia, Czechoslovakia, and Galicia. The very names of the men most prominent during part of the World War show this. Count Tisza was a Hungarian. Czernin was of Czech origin. General Borojevic, the last commander-in-chief of the Austrian Armies, was a Jugo-Slav. So much so that General Borojevic, being a Croatian, was after the war told that he had no pay to draw from Austria as he was not an Austrian. When he applied to Belgrade he was told that he was no Serbian, and was cut off there. Being reduced to absolute starvation, he ended the whole matter by killing himself, and he was quietly buried some months ago in Vienna."

Austria-Hungary, long an enforced coalition of contending forces, was held together in former times mainly by virtue of her alliance with Germany. She was the pet ward of Germany, which aided her in her trade advancement, and supported the pompous pretensions of her turgid aristocracy. Under Germany's protecting wing the nation grew and prospered. Her people lived in luxury. Her royalty and nobility presented the highest exemplars of superexalted aristocracy. Her foods were unrivaled, her feasts the finest in the world. The late Emperor Francis Joseph was the greatest epicure of modern times. Royalty everywhere delighted in the opportunity of visiting his castles. His cellars bulged with priceless wines, and his chef prepared the wild boar's head as none other could. He was the highest-salaried chef in the world. He headed a school of cookery that sent Vienna past all rivals as a culinary center. All Vienna partook of his art, for it was the epicurean emperor's pride that the people of his capital city should "play a good knife and fork."

Vienna Was Becoming Fashion Center

NOWHERE else could such good cookery be found, not even in Paris. Nowhere else such charming and affable women. Nowhere else, excepting New York, such well-dressed women. Vienna, the Imperial City, was rapidly forging to the front as fashion center. Vienna modes instead of Paris modes, ruled in all Central Europe, the Balkans and much of Russia.

But—"O! What a fall was there!" History has few examples of such a rapid retroversion. Austria has been deprived of the protection of her erstwhile fond guardian—Germany—and left to go it alone. Her castles are empty. Her royalty have flown. All her avenues of trade have been cut off, and her paper currency so demonetized that the face value of the small denominations is not equal the cost of printing them. Vienna, once the proudest city in Europe, now lies prostrate. Instead of the processions of modish women and gold-laced princes, her streets are now filled with crying beggars. Her historic mansions which in the gala days witnessed so much of pomp and pageantry now look down on scenes of heart-rending famine.

A writer in Herr Harden's journal, the *Zukunft*, of Berlin, says: "Not even the recovery of Austria, which itself is doubtful, could restore Vienna to safety. The poor and bigoted province of 4,000,000 peasants that now is Austria, could never support a town of 2,000,000 inhabitants, laid out and embellished lavishly by the proud dynasty that once resided in it."

Perhaps it is all as intended, just and fitting punishment for Austria's sins, but the incongruity, the

tragedy, of it is that the principal sufferers are the little children. They swarm the streets in rags and tatters begging for bread and frequently drop dead in their tracks. There is little milk for the babies and invalids. Most of Austria's cows had to be slaughtered to prevent their starving and to supply food for the hungry populace. When the babies were crying for milk Austria, like Germany, was compelled by the Peace Treaty to surrender large numbers of her remaining cows to her victors. Instead of the pre-war daily consumption of 795,000 quarts of milk, Vienna now is forced to get along with 43,500 quarts. Under the government allowance there is no milk at all for babies more than one year old, and a very small and expensive ration for those under one year. Many infant children of Vienna are fed on spinach soup which they suck from a bottle instead of milk.

It makes an American proud of his nation to recall that she has not been a party to any of these stern indemnity demands on Austria and Germany. While others were taking milk away from babies, America came gallantly to the babies' rescue by making free donations of milch cows.

All over Austria, American relief work is going on apace. In Vienna and its environs the American Relief Commission alone is maintaining 300,000 poor children. The Friends' Relief Mission, organized in America, has spread a network of mercy over Vienna in the form of 25 depots where 52,000 children are fed. Each mission is run in conjunction with a welfare center. The American Red Cross Society supplies rations free to the very poor who are unable to pay 80 kronen (crowns) for the two weeks' rations supplied by the Friends' relief. Statistics have been compiled by the American mission showing the terrible plight of Vienna children. Of those between 10 and 12 years of age, it is shown, 50 per cent are tuberculous, ninety per cent of those below six have rickets, this being due especially to malnutrition. The death rate of Vienna now exceeds the birth rate by 3.4 per thousand. In New York City the birth rate exceeds the death rate by 9.32 per thousand and in London, with all its poverty and slums, by 14.9 per thousand.

New Disease Killing Many

BOTH children and adults take sick and die from a new disease, called the "Vienna Sickness." It is a form of galloping consumption resulting from undernourishment and sleeping in dwellings that are poorly ventilated in summer and cold and damp in winter from lack of heating.

England, inspired by the American efforts, has begun an energetic crusade in the form of the "Save the Children's Fund" which promises good results.

More than \$120,000,000, the equivalent today of 78,000,000 kronen (crowns), have been poured into Austria in food and raw materials in the last two years through the medium of Allied, American and neutral credits. In addition, millions have been expended by Mr. Hoover's American Relief Commission and by such other philanthropic organizations as the British-Vienna Emergency Relief Fund, the Society of Friends and other kind-hearted societies in America, Argentine, Holland, Switzerland, the Scandinavian countries and elsewhere.

Large sums have been contributed by Catholic organizations resulting from the Pope's appeal addressed to all the bishops and archbishops of the Catholic world. He opened the subscription with a personal donation of 100,000 lire (\$19,300).

Four of the Allied countries have agreed to postpone their claims for reparation and of repayment of advances made to Austria since the armistice.

Germany, at a time when its own people scarcely had enough bread to eat, reduced the weekly bread ration for each individual by 50 grams to help Austria. By this means a weekly saving of 2,000,000 kilograms (4,400,000 pounds) was realized and the bread material placed at the disposal of the hungry Viennese.

But all the help that has been administered from all the sources does not seem to make much of a showing in relieving the distress, so great is the need.

The Austrians, it should be borne in mind, possess nothing like the stamina of the Germans to enable them to bear up under extreme adversity, such as defeat in arms entails. They are more at home in the parlor or in the soft shades of the concert garden, listening to the strains of an orchestra than they are on the battlefield marching to the harsh tunes of military bands. Had it not been for German aid they would have been completely swept away by the Russians and Italians at the first onsets. Instead of a help, Austria proved a heavy burden that Germany had to carry all through the war. Always Germany was being compelled to rush troops from the other fronts, no matter how great the pressure, to save the Austrians from rout. German militarists now declare that it was Germany's alliance with Austria which, more than anything else, caused that country to lose the war.

These are some of the reasons why Austria now remains the most dependently helpless nation in the world. An English commercial journal says: "Where a country is absolutely dependent, as Austria is, on

necessary imports which can be obtained only on long credit, and when that country persistently depreciates such credit as still remains to her abroad by continuous and reckless debasement of her currency, then her position is indeed desperate."

Suggestions for the rehabilitation of Austria's finances have finally been made by the League of Nations' Finance Committee, which, it is hoped, will help to relieve the distress. The Finance Committee visited Vienna in consequence of the serious report of the Austrian Section of the Reparations Commission. Its suggestions embrace the first real attempt of the League of Nations that has been made during nearly three years of peace to solve a definite concrete example of financial and economic exhaustion. Here are figures of the Austrian financial debacle as shown:

	1921	1914
Notes	Kronen 44,274,401,000	2,157,648,000
Gold	" 5,403,000	1,254,000,000
Exchange Kronen to \$	600	5

Money Situation Is Desperate

THUS, notwithstanding that Austria has been shorn of the greater part of her territories, her paper currency has increased more than twenty-fold. During the same period (1914-21) her gold has fallen to one-two-hundredths of its pre-war amount. The proportion of gold to notes, therefore, has diminished from more than one-half, to less than one-eight-thousandths.

The committee admits the situation in Austria is desperate and requires desperate remedies. It would be useless to propose deflation. Its efforts are to check further deflation. To this end the committee recommends: First, the creation of a strong and independent bank of issue; second, a balancing of the national budget, and third, an immediate internal loan to check the flood of new currency. All the political powers in Austria have pledged themselves to support this policy. Austria is already mortgaged up to the hilt as regards relief and reparations credits. The only solution of this problem, it is reported, is for the powers who have granted these credits to step aside for the present and to submit to the creation of "prior lien" bonds. This is now being done, many of Austria's principal creditors having already signified their consent.

Seeds of hatred sown by war propaganda among the Austrian Empire's former constituent lands, have germinated and grown until now Austria's worst enemies are her former constituencies. The territory now forming Czechoslovakia was formerly the main agricultural section. It was called "the cupboard of Austria." Germany, herself in want, has denied herself enough bread to lessen the hunger in Austria. But Czechoslovakia, which now rolls in plenty, will not turn a hand to relieve the distress of her sister republic. Karlsbad, which has taken the place formerly occupied by Vienna as the home of the table de lux, now regales herself on the finest wines and viands while the people of Vienna hunger. One of Czechoslovakia's principal industries is the production of beet sugar. Yet, when the children of Vienna were dying for the want of the energy sweets, Czechoslovakia would neither give nor sell them sugar.

The approach of winter in Austria is viewed with gravest apprehension. Coal is not to be had because the Peace Treaty transferred Austria's coal mines to Czechoslovakia. The Czechs, not being able to close a sufficiently profitable deal over the political bargain counter, have refused to sell coal to Austria.

Others Would Break Away

THERE is dissension among the few states remaining with Austria. Most of them are crying to be released from the dying country. The Tyrol has voted overwhelmingly for severance from Austria and union with Germany. Like action, though not official, has been taken by Upper Austria, Salzburg and Styria. This shows the complete break-up of Austrian unity and is believed to foreshadow further occupation of Austrian territory. Thus the prospects are fair that Austria will soon become even more reduced. The Jugo-Slavs probably will occupy South Carinthia. Both Hungary and Czechoslovakia are casting envious eyes at Western Hungary and it probably will soon be taken from Austria. The British minister in Austria has protested against the plebiscites, and declared that the action is calculated to prevent the granting of the needed credit to Austria. But without these credits Austria will soon be plunged into suffering and famine many times worse than now. It is not at all improbable that the Austrian population will soon be reduced in size through sheer starvation to proportions commensurate with the productivity of its remaining territory.

And so the reaping of the Versailles peace harvest goes on. The Texas ranchman is careful never to place more cattle on his range than the grass will support. The Illinois feeder would never stock his farm with more livestock than that for which he has food. They realize that the food supply is of first consideration. But the League of Nations, which deals in human instead of cattle herds, takes away from nations their productive land without giving any consideration whatever to the problem of food supply. No wonder then that a famine rages in Austria.